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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: "KIKWETE-OBAMA TALKS A CHANCE TO BOOST TIES"

The May 22nd edition of the English, National Media Group-owned, daily newspaper "The Citizen" (circulation 6,000) carried the following editorial:

"By becoming the first African leader to pay new American President Barack Obama a visit at the White House, Tanzania Head of State Jakaya Kikwete has just written yet another milestone in his diplomatic achievements. The meeting with Obama, the first African-American leader of the most powerful nation today, has been described, and rightly so, as not only an important encounter, but also a "first" for Tanzania.

For Mr. Obama, holding talks with Mr. Kikwete is an opportunity to share insights with an adept hand at Africa's place in international relations. It is not surprising, therefore, that the talks will be closely monitored on the continent. The Tanzanian leader is not on a state visit, and being granted an audience speaks volumes about the premium attached to the relations between the two countries.

President Kikwete will definitely use this chance to get to know a little better a man whose father was from Kenya, which is not only our close neighbor, but a country with which we share deep historical, trade and other ties. The Tanzanian leader might for instance, also wish to brief President Obama on the steady progress towards East African regional integration.

The two leaders' parley is another big score in Tanzania's growing stature as a major player in regional and continental political and economic diplomacy. It comes against the backdrop of preparations for President Obama's first trip to Africa as the U.S. leader next July, during which he will go to Ghana. Granting President Kikwete some time from his busy schedule is significant. Tanzania has become an influential player in seeking solutions to Africa's political and economic problems.

This brief call will go some way in further bolstering the country's image as a beacon of peace in a region often characterized by political turmoil and bad governance. It's a continuation of Mr. Kikwete's solid link with the American leadership, which was cemented with a rare visit to Tanzania last year by former President George Bush, during which he spent several days.

The meeting with Mr. Obama also somewhat confirms President Kikwete's own status, having been touted as among the rising generation of African leaders committed to not only entrenching good governance in their own countries, but also promoting regional peace and stability. This is something he ably demonstrated, as chairman of the African Union (AU) last year.

As a country, therefore, we should be happy that we continue to receive accolades in the world, from governments and multilateral organizations. The challenge is to turn this into opportunities for

economic gain for the country and our people and to enhance relations with our neighbors.

Announcing the meeting, the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam emphasized Tanzania's strategic position, stating that their President has pledged to work with like-minded counterparts to change the global politics and economy for the better. And it confirmed that on the agenda were a wide range of regional and bilateral issues, including a U.S. pledge to promote good governance, economic development, and stability on the continent.

President Kikwete has also been in the forefront in seeking answers to the continent's economic stagnation and widespread poverty. Over a month ago, in the search for an African rescue plan, he hosted the Africa-World Bank meeting in Dar es Salaam that crafted the continent's position ahead of the G20 meeting in London.

We hope that from this first contact, President Kikwete will come away with not only a mightily useful contact, but also a renewed vigor and commitment to push Tanzania higher up on the governance scales and also help enhance regional co-operation and development.

ANDRE